

Committee on Resources

Testimony

Subcommittee on Water and Power

Saturday, May 31, 1997

Lewiston, Idaho

**TESTIMONY OF
ARTHUR M. TAYLOR, CHAIRMAN
FISH, WATER, AND WILDLIFE SUBCOMMITTEE
NEZ PERCE TRIBAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
before the
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON WATER AND POWER
COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES**

**FIELD HEARING
LEWISTON, IDAHO
MAY 31, 1997**

My name is Arthur M. Taylor, I am a member of the Nez Perce Tribe. Also, I am a member of the Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee and the Chairman of the Fish, Water, and Wildlife Subcommittee. It is with the utmost respect and honor that I am allowed to submit written testimony on behalf of my people. From time immemorial, the Nez Perce People have utilized the fish, water, animals, and medicinal plants which have been produced by the Columbia River. All living creatures which have been created by the Creator are considered sacred to the Nez Perce People. It is simply for this reason during the springtime, we honor these gifts which have been bestowed upon the Nez Perce. We honor the return of the first salmon back to the river, as well as, honoring the first roots and berries in special ceremonies. The Nez Perce People are proud of their heritage in the Pacific Northwest and in particular our heritage along the Columbia River.

With the importance the Native Americans have played in helping restore the salmon population back to the Columbia River, the four Columbia River Tribes should have been invited to participate and give testimony to the Water and Power Subcommittee. The four (the Nez Perce Tribe, the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, the Yakama Indian Nation, and the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs) Columbia River tribes have treaty reserved rights on the Columbia River and should be consulted when making decisions regarding our reserved rights. Government to Government consultation is necessary when making decisions concerning sovereign governments.

For the past several years, many federal agencies have completed several studies on the Columbia River. This would include the barging of salmon through the dams, using "flip" gates as a means of allowing fish to pass through the dam efficiently, in effect less mortality, and have set up programs to limit the predation upon the juvenile salmon while passing through the pool of each dam. These programs have blatantly failed and we are no closer to restoring the salmon back into the Columbia River Basin than we were several years ago; this has lead to more species being listed as an Endangered Species or have the potential of being listed

in the very near future. There are many factors which must be considered when restoring salmon back to the Columbia River Basin: the water temperature of the John Day Pool, the dissolved gas issues, the quality of the water, and above all else, the quantity or flow of the water. The flow of the water is extremely important for the migration of juvenile salmon on their way to ocean. Anadromous fish utilize the flow of the water in order to determine the direction of the ocean, however, man has taken away the flow of water, whereby the migrating juvenile salmon are left to predation.

In order to restore the salmon back to the Columbia River Basin, we need to restore the natural river flow back to the Columbia River, which in essence would lower the temperature of the John Day Pool making the habitat more sustainable for the salmon. This issue should not be an issue solely for the "irrigators" who utilize the water for their personal benefit, but for the entire northwest. Restoring salmon back to the Columbia River Basin would help to restore the economy and make the Pacific Northwest once again known for it's natural resources again. The Nez Perce Tribe deserves to be recognized as a sovereign government because we have inherent rights which are protected by Treaty, therefore, we should not be considered the "general public" such as all of these water user coalitions.

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